

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) testified Thursday before the House Natural Resources Committee on a bill he filed that would expand the boundaries of the San Antonio Missions Historic Park.

H.R. 4438 would expand and preserve the historical Missions of San Antonio, provide for a new operations and education center and authorize a study of lands to be included within the Park's boundary. The bill is co-sponsored by the other Members of the Bexar County Congressional delegation – Congressman Henry Cuellar, Congressman Charles A. Gonzalez and Congressman Lamar Smith.

“The City of San Antonio sits on one of the most historic and culturally significant sites in Texas, the Missions,” said Congressman Rodriguez. “The San Antonio Missions Historic Park needs to be preserved and hopefully expanded so these rich, timeless lands don’t get lost to modernity, but rather are protected for the future. Together with all of the partners involved, we will restore the river and these neighborhoods to their historic beauty and preserve our history while supporting future growth and development.”

Preservation of the Missions, as well as improvement of the San Antonio River, has broad community support. Also testifying at the hearing were **Stephen Whitesell**, Associate Director for Park Planning, Facilities and Lands of the National Park Service (NPS); and **Susan Chandoha**, Executive Director of Los Compadres de San Antonio Missions National Historical Park.

H.R. 4438 would allow the NPS to lease space for a new park headquarters to supplement the current headquarters, which are inadequate. It does not meet fire, safety or security standards and the park's one million Spanish colonial objects collection is stored in four locations, two of which do not meet NPS storage standards, according to Associate Director Whitesell.

The bill expands the boundary of the park by 151 acres, 118 of which are already owned or being donated or transferred to the park. The land exchange costs will be paid for by the San Antonio River Authority with the NPS picking up minimal transaction costs. The additional 33 acres would be purchased by the NPS or donated to the park. The bill also authorizes a study to identify lands that could be included in the park boundaries.

The San Antonio Missions form the largest concentration of Catholic missions in North America and represent some of the best-preserved Spanish colonial architecture and history in the Southwest.

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